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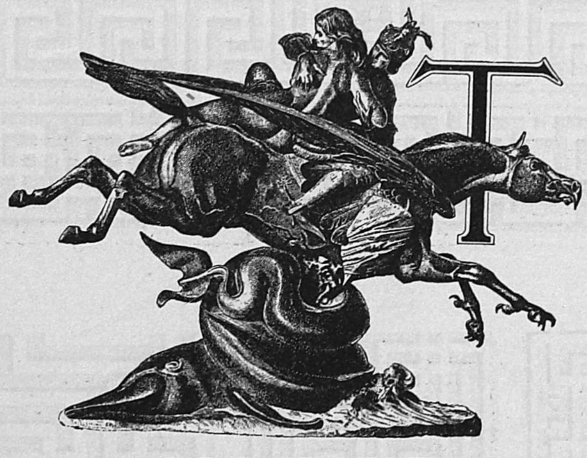
WOOD CARVING, ADAPTED FOR BOTH THE AMATEUR AND THE PROFESSIONAL.

BY W. N. BROWN,

Author of "Wood Turning for Amateurs," "Working n Brass," "The Arch, Vault and Dome," "The Ancient Ecclesiastical Wood Work of England," "The History of Decorative Art,"A Manual of Wood Engraving," etc., etc.

CHAPTER IV

SIMPLE MOLDINGS.



ROGER AND ANGELICA, BY BARYE.

THAT which constitutes preliminary practice having been considered in my preceding chapter, I now pass to that which is really the next step in my graduated course of lessons, namely, the cutting of simple moldings, an acquaintance with the cutting of which it is quite advisable for the carver to acquire in an early stage of his career, not only for the guidance of his hand, but for the education of the eye. These members enter into so many descriptions of architectural and domestic work—both simple and elaborate—that a knowledge of molding is absolutely necessary. Moldings, or as they are ofttimes termed, beads, appear to have been employed for the purposes of ornamentation at a very early period, as will be at once seen on consulting some old architectural remains, and they were not unknown to the ancient Egyptians and Assyrians, as Mr. Dennis, in his grand work upon "The Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria," gives many sections of Etruscan moldings. But for all practical purposes of ornamentation or decoration my *résumé* of available moldings will begin with the classic nations of antiquity—the Greeks and the Romans. These moldings were of curved sections. When, however, later on, the Gothic builders originated a style of architecture widely diverse from the old classic schools, they invented a system of moldings suitable to the style, and these are, generally speaking, angular and complex, in opposition to the simplicity and curvilinear characters of the moldings or headings of the classic periods. They differ also in this, that, whereas the Greek applied enrichments in but a small quantity to his work, the Gothic architects—particularly the early ones, applied ornamentation with a lavish hand, with the result that many of their works are tasteless in conception and *bizarre* in execution.

As before hinted, these moldings can be classified as Greek and Roman—the former being formed of some conic section, such as a portion of the ellipse or hyperbole, and sometimes in the form of a straight line, much in the form of a chamfer; while the latter have their sections composed of the arcs of circles, the same moldings having the same curvature throughout, whence it follows that the Greek moldings are far more difficult to execute in wood carved work than are the Roman beads.

This brief introduction is necessary to a proper understanding, by the amateur especially, of the characteristics which govern these two schools, as they may fittingly be called, but in both the Greek and Roman moldings their species is determined by the position of their extremities, or the fact of their being either concave or convex.

At figures 24, 25, 26 and 27 are shown sections of the principal moldings, which will be found utilized alike in decoration, architecture, furniture and picture frames, to say nothing of their utilization in scroll work, particularly of the period of the Renaissance, when rich scroll and foliate work were very much affected. That shown at A in figure 24 is a quarter round, at times also termed a Roman ovolo, being as a fact a quarter circle. At B is shown a cavetto, which is exactly the reverse of the preceding sample, being the concave side of a quarter circle instead of the convex. At C is depicted a cyma reversa, composed of two quarters or segments of a circle; while at D is the cyma rector, or reverse of the preceding. At E is shown the torus, which is a semi-circle described on a vertical diameter; and at F is a scotia, which, projecting equally at each extremity, occasions the contour to be the exact reverse of the torus. These, in their simple forms, are so exceedingly and self-apparently easy to describe, that it is not necessary to give the *modus operandi* here. For those Roman moldings, where the projections and the heights are unequal, the extremities being given it is necessary to deal at length. Thus to describe the Roman ovolo shown at G in figure 24, let *a* be the upper extremity, and *b* the lower; take the vertical line in height, from *b*, and with that radius describe an arc; from *a*, with the same radius, describe another arc, cutting the former, then from *c* with the same radius describe the arc *a b*, which will be the contour described. To describe the cavetto, illustrated at H in the same figure, proceed thus: With a radius equal to the height of the molding, from the points *a* and *b* describe arcs cutting each other in *e;* then from *e*, with the same radius, describe the arc *a b*, which will give the contour of the cavetto required. To describe a cyma reversa, that shall touch a straight line at the points of contrary flexure as shown in figure 25: Join the projections *a* and *b* by the straight line *a b*; bisect *a b* in *d*, draw the tangent *e d* parallel to a line given in position; through *d* draw *c c′*, perpendicular to *e d*; bisect *a d* by a perpendicular *g c*; from the intersection *c* describe the arc *a g d*, make *d c* equal to *d c′*; from the lower point *c′* describe the arc *d b*, when the curve of contrary flexure *a d e* will be the cyma reversa required. To describe cyma recta, to touch a straight line at the points of contrary flexure, parallel to a line given in position as shown at figure 26, proceed as follows: Join the points of projection *a* and *b*; bisect *a b* in *d*, and draw the line *d e* parallel to the line given in position; bisect *a d* by the perpendicular *e g*; from *c*, with the radius *c d*, describe the arc *a d*, make *d c′* equal to *d c*, and from the other *c′* within describe *a b*, then *a d b* is the cyma recta required. At figure 27 is shown the Greek ovolo, which the most elementary student of ornament or architecture will see is far finer in subtle beauty and grace than the one just treated, while authorities well able to form an opinion have declared it to be the finest molding in existence—ancient or modern. I shall not give here the methods of obtaining this and other forms of Greek moldings, for the principal reason it would take

Figure 32.

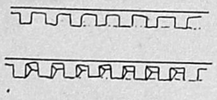


Figure 33.

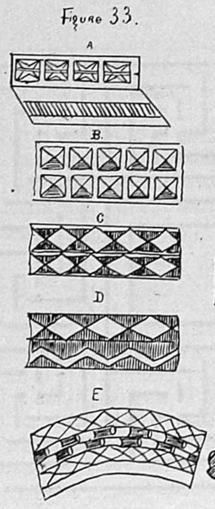


Figure 28.

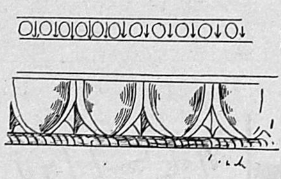


Figure 29

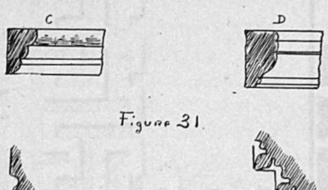


Figure 31

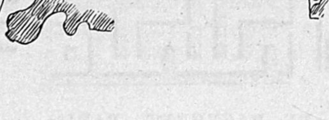


Figure 25.

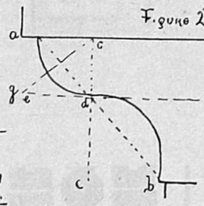


Figure 26.

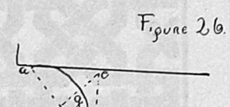


Figure 27.

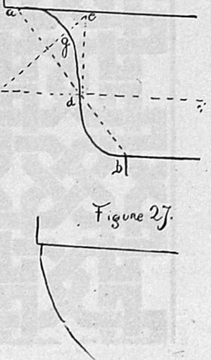


Figure 30

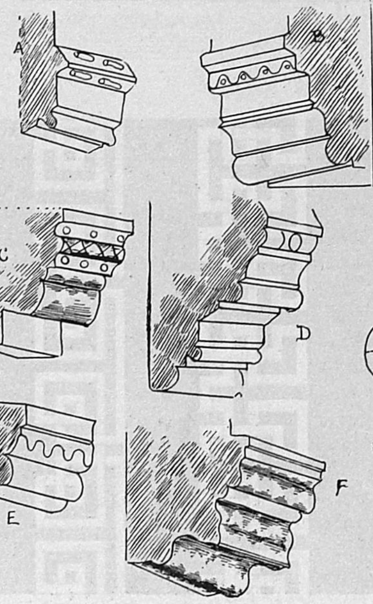
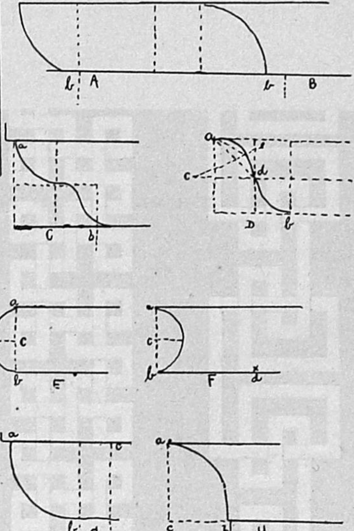


Figure 24.



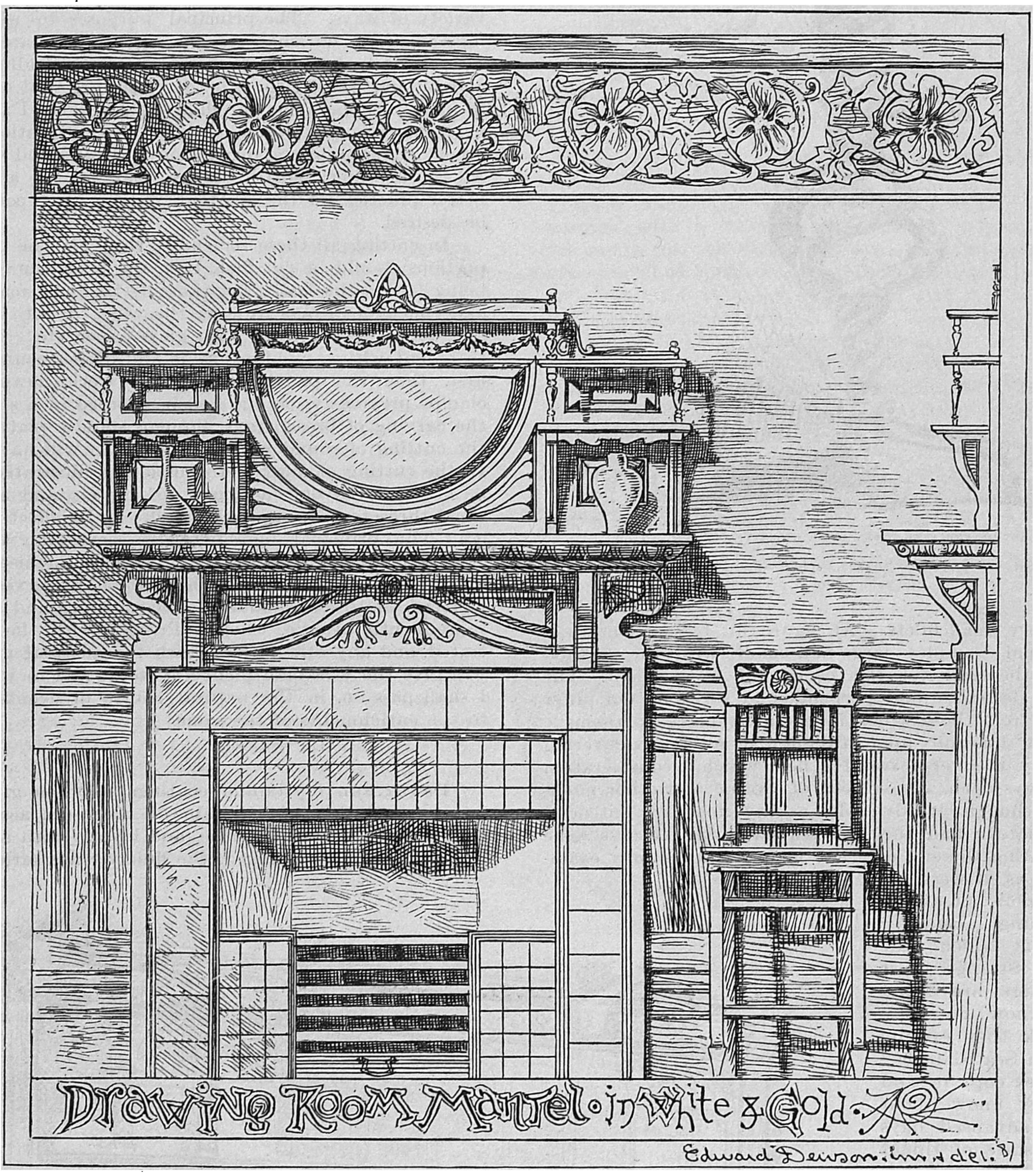
up far more of my space than I can spare, beside which the information can be readily obtained from treatises upon advanced geometry or Greek architecture, while still another reason is that these Greek curves, being elliptical, are far from easy to cut with the common semicircular carving gouge, which the Roman moldings, the methods of obtaining which have just been described, are not.

Having obtained these various moldings, or whichever one the workman particularly requires, and having affixed the working drawings in a convenient position to be readily seen during the progress of the work, the operator should then strike the sectional profile of the particular molding to be carved on a piece of zinc or tin, and cut this out with a pair of strong shears, while even stout cardboard will answer the purpose. This forms a "template" or gauge with which to try the work as it is gone on with, and needless to say this gauge must be kept quite flat. Then in the wood carving itself, the various channels can be cut with the gouge—with which the greater portion of this description of work will be accomplished—and in some cases with the V-tool, assisted when necessary with the mallet, but the less of this the workman, especially the amateur, has the better. They should be verified from time to time with the template, and any inequalities rectified. If the channels should not be so smooth as it is wished, a rat's tail file, deprived of the handle, and traversed along, will make this all right, but it is considered best to leave the carving as it is from the gouge and chisel, without any supplementary touchings up. Of course, it is hardly necessary to remark that moldings used commercially, in furniture and frame work, are not carved in this old fashioned, tedious, yet artistic manner, but they are struck by what are known as "molding planes"—tools in which the "sole," or face, of the wooden block and the "iron" or cutting edge are both formed to the contour of the required molding. When required, however, in large quantities, the moldings are turned out by machinery, in which the Germans and Americans have made wonderful advances.

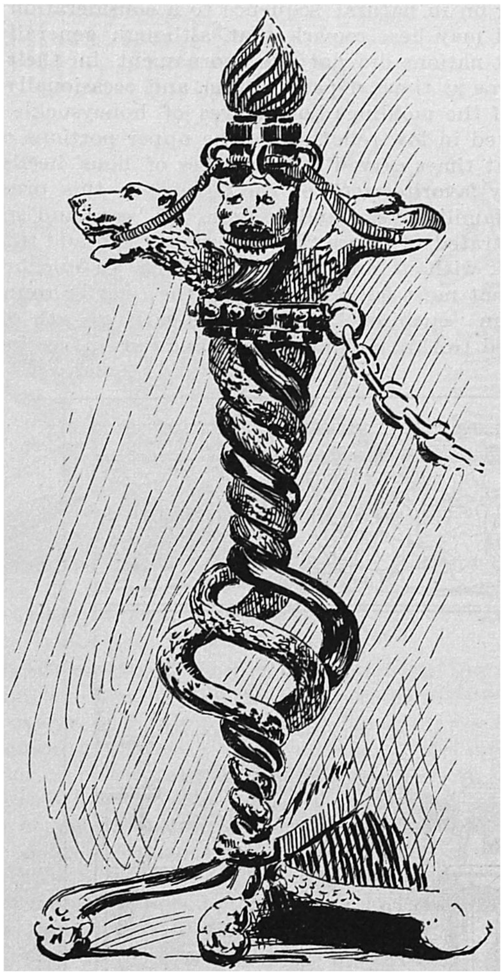
As I before remarked, the Greek and Roman moldings are but seldom enriched, as the fine and exquisite taste of the people would not permit of the graceful contours being impaired by ornament, in which there can be no question they were right.

Passing on in natural sequence to a consideration of Gothic moldings, I may here remark that, although generally speaking the ancient nations did not affect ornament in their moldings, this rule was at times departed from, and occasionally the larger members of the moldings bore leaves of honeysuckle and other plants carved in low relief, while the upper portions of moldings were also at times carved with a series of lions' heads in projection, a very favorite *motif* of the Greeks in this ornamentation being the familiar "egg and tongue," or "egg and spear" ornament, illustrated at figure 28. The carver can add this ornament to his work without any fear of creating an anachronism, but the ornament must only be put on the quarter round, when it is termed an "enchinus." During the early growth of the style, the so-called Gothic moldings were angular in section, while in the Norman style the moldings consist almost entirely of hollows and rounds, variously combined, with an admixture of splays and a few fillets, the ogee and ovolo being seldom found, and the cyma recta hardly at all. In illustration of this I have, at figure 29, adduced some examples, where A is a specimen from Bisham, in Norfolk; B is from Norwich Cathedral; and C and D from Peterborough Cathedral. In figure 30 will be found some further illustrations, which I have taken the liberty of reproducing from Parker's "Dictionary of Architecture," one of the best known works on the subject to be found in England. In this collection of sketches A is copied from the Castle of Newcastle, in Northumberland; B from the west front of Lincoln Cathedral; C from that of Canterbury; D from an archway in the choir of the Cathedral of Peterborough; E from Canterbury, and F from the western transept of Ely Cathedral, and I would here draw my reader's attention to the fact that all these examples are more or less enriched.

In the style known as early English, the moldings are lighter


Drawing Room Mantel · in White & Gold ·
Edward Dewson. inv. & del. '87

and more boldly cut than in the Norman, although the varieties are neither many nor great. As a rule they consist of alternate rounds and hollows, these latter being very deeply cut, and having a few very small fillets. At figure 31 I have shown a couple of sectional examples—large and small—with the method of working out the same for the benefit of the student. The moldings of the decorated and perpendicular styles do not differ very essentially from those which immediately preceded them.



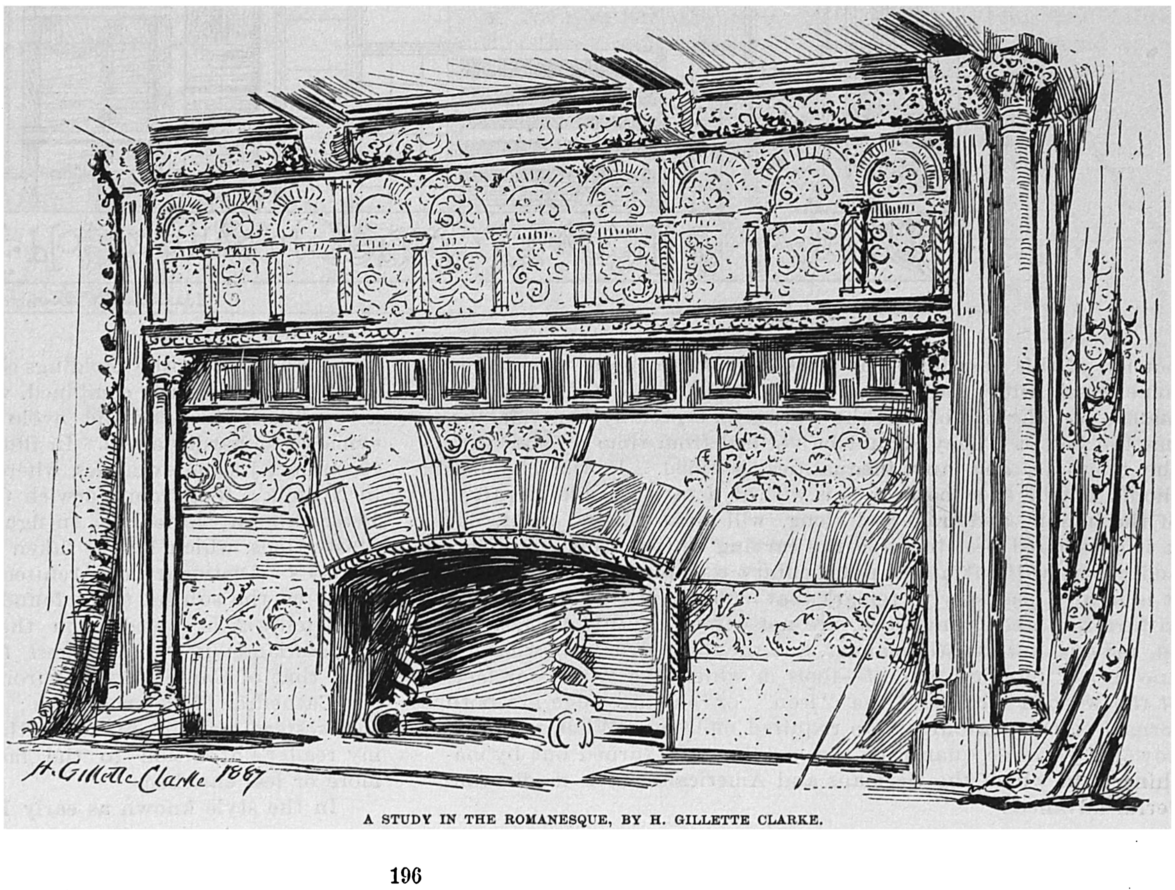
SUGGESTION FOR FIRE IRONS, BY H. GILLETTE CLARKE.

Eagle, Serpent and Dog, with bodies of Snakes, each treated differently as to texture and color effect.

I have dwelt thus fully upon, although by no means covering at all adequately the very extensive field which a consideration of the subject lays open, the subject of Gothic and other moldings, because I thought it advisable, as my lines are intended for both the amateur and the professional carver, to give some information relating thereto, and not let my readers copy examples, proceding as it were, by rule of thumb, and not understanding anything about or appreciating that which they were copying. Strange as it may sound there are many masons who know no more about the work they execute than the South Sea islander—they cut it, they copy it—and that is all they know about it. In these advanced days that is not a state of things which should obtain, and it is with a view of counteracting this blind method of procedure that I have taken the opportunity of explaining my work, and here I would impress upon the intelligent pupil, especially if he be artistic, another means whereby he may materially increase his knowledge, and that is by making a sketch of any architectural or furnishing detail—molding, corbel, panel, or what not—which may take his attention in the course of his travels, notably in the ancient cathedrals of Europe, which are rich in artistic bits of the kind, and then copying them in wood at some time during his hours of leisure. In this manner the lover of wood carving will not only obtain practice, but that of the best possible kind, while the preparation of working drawings—without which no wood carving job should ever be entered upon—will make a good artistic training—a training unfortunately too often neglected by wood carvers. Before closing my remarks upon Gothic moldings, I may state that the ornaments and enrichments of that period were of an analagous character. At figure 32 is shown a specimen of the Norman period, and now known as the "square billet." The specimens illustrated are from Normandy. At figure 33 are shown some examples of the Norman style. The first, A, consisting of star shaped ornaments and a cable pattern below is copied from the White Tower of the Tower of London; B is taken from Clemping Church, in Sussex, England; C is from the wall of the north gate of the Close at Salisbury; D is from Weeping St. James, in Lincolnshire; and E is from Walmer, in Kent, both these last being combinations of the billet and diaper patterns, and all of these will afford admirable designs for practice, and one utilizable in a variety of ways. The principal purposes to which these moldings and their enrichments can be utilized are for borders of carafe stands, bread and cheese platters, moldings in furniture and picture frames, though their uses are well nigh endless, and in many instances the enrichments, of which I shall treat in my next chapter, are especially suited for utilization as diaper, or repeat patterns in the decoration of panels and such like spaces. All the moldings illustrated are easy to set and cut out, and better practice for the amateur wood carver could not possibly be desired.

In cutting all these remember that all the more prominent portions should be cut first, then the next, the lowest relief bits being left to the last. Let the cuts be finely made and cleanly, and endeavor always to leave the work direct from the chisel, and do not tinker it up with glass paper, etc. Where a panel is to be cut with a molding frame and diaper centre, cut the frame first, then the panel, holding the work down flat, with the clamps previously, on the bench, proceed in a similar plan with the carving of bread trays, liqueur stands, platters, etc., but in the cutting of round work another plan will have to be pursued. In the cutting of most of the moldings illustrated not much will be necessary beyond a couple of chisels and a gouge, as with these three tools most of the work can be effectively accomplished. The principal ingredients in successful wood carving are care and patience, and if the former is exercised in the way of seeing that each portion of the pattern preserves its own degree of relief, the result should be a harmonious and satisfactory, and consequently artistic, whole. Practice with the specimens illustrated, and any other with which the amateur may come across, will give the workman plenty of work, and in my next chapter I shall pass on, in the natural course of events, from moldings to the enrichments of the same.

Beautiful crystalline coatings may be given to wood by mixing a solution of sulphate of magnesia, acetate of soda or sulphate of tin with dextrine, and laying, with a soft brush, the thinnest possible coating of the fluid on the surface.



A STUDY IN THE ROMANESQUE, BY H. GILLETTE CLARKE.